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ABSTRACT

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COMMUNITY SERVICES BRIEF

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University of California
Los Angeles

The community services provided by community colleges are often the most highly praised but at the same time, the least defined and understood functions of these institutions. Responsibility for community service, which has been assumed by two-year colleges in addition to the traditional functions of transfer academic and vocational programs, has led to the change in name from junior to community college in many states. Community service programs vary widely among colleges, as documents described in this Brief will show. Partly, the differences result from the different needs of the community the colleges serve, but also from a more serious problem--a lack of a clear philosophical base on which the programs rest.

This Brief reviews a variety of materials about two-year college community services programs. Specific topics include: their philosophy and definition, organization and administration, descriptions of noteworthy programs, and models for new community service programs.

Most of the documents were selected from material received and processed by the ERIC Clearinghouse for Junior Colleges. These can be identified by the ERIC Document (ED) number following the citation in the Bibliography. All ERIC documents are indexed in Research in Education, a monthly abstract journal found in most college and university libraries.

Philosophy and Definition

Comparing definitions of the phrase "community services" reveals the variety of beliefs held concerning the major purposes of this aspect of two-year colleges. One definition comes from Harlacher, the author of the only book written on community services, The Community Dimension of the Community College (1969). Harlacher says: "Community services are educational, cultural and recreational services above and beyond regularly scheduled day and evening classes."

Another definition is proposed by Myran and is based, in part on responses of members of AACJC's National Council on Community Services to a survey in 1971. Community services are "Those action programs of the community college, undertaken independently or in cooperation with other community groups and agencies, which direct the educational resources of the college toward serving individual, group and community needs." Most of the respondants agreed that the primary mission of the community college is education, and that, in a broad sense, all community college efforts can be interpreted as being community services.

Two of the problems of developing a philosophy of community services is to define community and, since other agencies in a community offer services to the populace, to identify the needs of the community that the college should attempt to serve. The process of defining a community or a region to which a college is most closely related has been described by Gilley and Palmer (1972). They reported on a conference devoted to the establishment of short- and long-range goals for Wytheville Community

College to serve its community.

College leaders should realize that taking the needs of the community seriously can lead to changes in the regular college program. Since, in some cases, community services extend educational services to community groups that are not otherwise affected by conventional college programs, a variety of new and innovative organizational approaches are often required. These changes may in turn affect the traditional approaches of the entire college (Myran, 1969).

There are many indications that community service is maturing into a distinct aspect of community college work. The creation of the National Council on Community Services and their journal, The Community Services Catalyst, attest to the growing effort to develop a literature and philosophy. This quarterly journal contains articles by practitioners describing specific programs as well as commentary and analysis by others interested in community colleges. Progress toward clarifying the purposes and accomplishments of community service programs will be achieved only as community college and program administrators begin to set precise goals and objectives that are amenable to evaluation (A. Cohen, 1972).

Organization and Administration

Successful community service programs are not created overnight. As with other college programs, they require careful planning and a great deal of attention. The first step in the planning process is to develop a statement of institutional mission. The systematic involvement of community action groups throughout the college district is the next step, followed by program development, and finally, the implementation and evaluation stages. These stages are discussed in depth in a monograph entitled Planning Community Services by Larsen and Reitan (1971).

Development of good formal and informal communications with the community is a key element for a successful community services program. Herrscher and Hatfield (1969) focus on ways a college can improve relations with the public in the immediate region. Techniques include the offering of leisure activities and opening campus facilities to community use. Horvath (1969) extends this list to include the resources of the whole campus such as having students available to show guests around campus or encouraging faculty to make addresses to community groups. Three methods of sampling community opinion on matters relevant to the college are: community advisory committees, community coordinating councils, and community surveys (Robin, 1971). Use of the community survey technique is probably the most effective method of broadening the college's mission to provide relevant and needed services.

Goals and objectives can be developed for community services programs just as they can be for college courses. Specifying objectives makes the process of implementing plans and evaluating the success of programs more feasible. Mount San Jacinto College (California) has compiled a collection of institutional objectives, "Another Step Toward Accountability," that includes those from the Community Services Division for 1972-73.

Organizing and administering the wide variety of activities termed community services is made easier by categorizing these types of activities. One set of operational categories is provided by Raines (1971 and revised in 1972).

(1) Individual and Self-development functions:

personal counseling
educational extension - weekend, evening and mini courses
educational expansion - special seminars, tours, contractual in-plant training, etc.
social outreach - programs to increase the earning power, educational level, and political influence of the disadvantaged
cultural development
leisure-time activities

(2) Community Development functions:

community analysis - collection and analysis of data
interagency cooperation - establishing linkage between related programs of the college and the community
advisory liaison - identifying persons for advisory committees for college programs
public forum
civic action
staff consultation - identifying and making available consulting skills of the faculty

(3) Program Development functions:

public information - interpreting college resources to the college staff as well as to community residents

professional development
program management
conference planning
budget utilization
program evaluation

For Raines, the community services office not only makes college services available to the community but also is responsible for interpreting the needs of the community to students, faculty and administration.

The size of the community services division depends on several factors including the budget available for community services and the organization of the college. Some colleges have decentralized the community services functions so that they are handled jointly by various administrators, student personnel staff and public relations personnel. Shaw and Cummiskey (1970) recommend the creation of a community services center to provide information on resources and services that are available in the community. A description of one college's community services

program and its organization is available from the Foothill Community College District (1971).

Noteworthy Community Services Programs

The ERIC Junior College collection contains numerous reports of specific community services programs. Since most of the reports include a program rationale as well as initial and long term evaluation efforts, they are useful both as models for other colleges and as demonstrations of the wide variety of community service activities being offered.

Community college students have been involved in community services projects since the 1960's. While these programs have been organized by the students themselves or by the Student Personnel Division, Goldman (1969) suggests that these activities should be considered community service regardless of what office on campus assumes administrative responsibility. In his paper, Goldman reviews student service activities at seven California junior colleges focusing special attention on the Educational Participation in Communities (EPIC) program at Los Angeles City College. Peralta Community College District (California) is an example of a district that has taken its commitment to serve its surrounding urban community seriously. Its Inner-City Project, specifically designed as a force for change in the community, includes a student service corps, community development centers, an enrichment program, and a scholarship program. Identified weaknesses of the project include: less-than-expected success in instigating new community leadership; early mistakes in delegation of responsibility; and failure to specify researchable questions to evaluate the project (Elsner, 1970). Reporting on the difficulties encountered in setting up services for non-traditional college students can be especially useful for other colleges considering such programs.

Another project to help an urban disadvantaged community is Contra Costa College's (California) mobile counseling unit. The counseling unit and program were publicized to the community through the cooperation of local, state, and federal agencies involvement of the counselors in various community group activities, recruitment by existing clientele, dissemination of information to local businesses, and use of mass media. The report on this project includes the results of a two-year study of recruits and a description of changes in college admission, registration and other on-campus procedures that resulted from the off-campus services (Edwards, 1971).

Community services have also taken the form of non-credit or non-degree courses designed around particular community needs. In 1970 Homisak studied the industrial-technical education provided through the continuing education and community services programs in Pennsylvania's Community Colleges. The report based on data collected from local industries as well as the 12 colleges, provides information on industry's perspective toward community services by local colleges.

Educational services may also be provided for a distinct group in a community. The Hawaii State Senior Center (1971), sponsored by Honolulu

Community College, opened in 1969 and by 1970 had 698 regular and associate members plus 1500 guests participating in activities. The University of Hawaii and many public and private agencies cooperated in supporting the Center. In this project, individualized counseling and programs are combined with social, educational and recreational group activities.

One way to develop community service programs is to consider them as extensions of, or complementary programs to, existing or planned educational programs at the college. The "Affirmative Action Program for Ethnic Minorities" (1970) at Los Rios Community College District (California) is a District-wide effort to enhance minority students' opportunities to succeed in college and to increase understanding and sensitivity among the various ethnic groups in the college communities. Services such as remedial education, counseling and financial aid are provided for students on campus and community activities include on- and off- campus classes and workshops, speakers, cooperative activities, public information and community advisory committees. The five participating colleges cooperate in the resolution of common problems such as funding and research.

Finally, a noteworthy example of a rural two-year college community services program is the effort underway at Flathead Valley Community College in Montana (Van Dyne, 1973). In a district the size of the state of Connecticut, with a population of 39,000, and no other higher education facilities, Flathead College is directing as much effort toward adult education as it does for the traditional academic transfer and occupational programs combined. Working in existing buildings throughout the district, the college takes its services to its constituents and is therefore, probably more closely in tune with community needs than some colleges which have extensive physical plants.

New Models of Community Services

Community service programs are often criticized as being comprised of unrelated activities that do not always reflect the college's philosophy and purposes. Many times community service programs are not as well conceived as the examples cited above. Proposals to improve community services have attempted to show how basic the services are to the colleges' central purpose being community colleges.

Harlacher (1972), for example, pictures a community renewal college which would serve as a change agent for the betterment of local conditions. Such a college would unite and improve the community by bringing its residents together and teaching them the attitudes, skills, and knowledge they need to better themselves and society. Thus, the lines between the community and the college would be blurred by the creation of adjunct learning centers located throughout the community. At present, however, Harlacher suggests that implementation of the community renewal college concept is hampered by the rules of state education and accreditation agencies.

Greater involvement by members of the community in the service of individual and community needs is also the major component of proposals of Stanton (1970) and Purdy (1971). Both favor college sponsored community volunteer centers. The authors feel that related practical experience will give learned concepts and course material a greater personal meaning to young people. Purdy would open these centers to non-students as well as students, thus encouraging members of the community to be involved in college-sponsored, community-directed projects.

The College of the Whole Earth, proposed by M. Cohen (1971), assumes an even closer tie between the college and the community around it. The community and the problems associated with its socio-economic structure would constitute the basis for the college's core curriculum. Information collection and dissemination activities would be basic to the school's program which would include the examination of community resources and evaluation of information from worldwide sources about similar problems. Students would review community problems, survey resources and propose solutions.

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Availability of ERIC Documents

Microfiche copies of these documents can be viewed in any of the more than 500 libraries across the country that subscribe to the ERIC microfiche collection. A list of these libraries is available on request from the Clearinghouse. Individual copies of the documents can also be purchased on microfiche (MF) or in paper copy (PC) from the ERIC Document Reproduction Service, P. O. Box 0, Bethesda, Maryland 20014. MF prices are $.65 per document regardless of length; PC costs $3.29 per unit of 100 pages or less. Payment must accompany orders totaling less than $10.00; a handling charge is not required.

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